CHEN YI
Suite for Cello and Chamber Winds
KC Capriccio • Feng • Woodwind Quintet • Tu
Carter Enyeart, Cello • Members of The Lubbock Chorale
Texas Tech University Wind Ensemble • Sarah McKoin
Chen Yi (b. 1953)

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Chinese American composer Chen Yi brings a unique compositional voice to the wind ensemble. Welding the traditions and sounds of the East with those of her adopted West remain a hallmark of Chen's music and is reflected in this collection of world premiere recordings from the earliest wind quintet of 1987 to the Suite for Cello and Chamber Winds of 2004.

Most evident in the latter, Chen borrows extensively from folk-tunes, Chinese percussion, stringed, and wind instruments as she seeks to emulate not only the sounds, but also the spirit and festivities with which these instruments are often associated. The Suite for Cello and Chamber Winds was originally titled Sound of the Five and was written in 1998 for Mimi Hwang and the Ying String Quartet following a commission from the Eastman School of Music. In 2004 Chen re-orchestrated the work for chamber winds, seeking to separate the solo cello sound from the string ensemble and settled upon a small chamber wind ensemble in reproducing the sounds and style of the lusheng, set bells and drums, hsiao and ch'in, which are all traditional Chinese instruments.

Chen further describes these instruments and the way they are used in the East:

“The lusheng is an age-old mouth organ with bamboo pipes. Villagers of various minorities in Southwest Asia often play together while dancing in lusheng ensembles to celebrate Spring holidays. The instruments from the lusheng family range from the bass (23 feet long) to the soprano (12 inches) in the ensemble. The lead player performs with the smallest (lusheng, dancing in complicated movements around the ensemble, which responds with colourful pentatonic harmonies in the background.

“The history of set bells can be traced back to the pre-Qin period (Shang Dynasty, c. 16th century-11th century B.C.) Made from bronze, every bell produces two tones (played in different positions), which can form a major or minor third, or a major second. Grouped from 3-64 bells as a set, it is a melodic instrument and is played in an orchestra at court.

“The hsiao is a vertical bamboo flute, which carries lyrical melodies through delicate lines, grace notes and silence. The ch'in is a 2000-year old Chinese seven-string zither, which has a rich repertoire in the history of Chinese music and literature. In ch'in performance, it produces various articulations by different fingerings of plucking and vibratos, played by both hands. These two instruments are often played together and produce a good balance for sonority and timbre.

“The Flower Drum has a membrane on both sides. It is also the name of a popular folk-dance in the Han majority. Groups of people play the flower drums hung at their waists in dynamic rhythms while dancing in open fields or in marches to celebrate happy occasions. The gesture is vivace and the sound strong and passionate.”

She goes on to describe the various movements and how the cello interacts with the ensemble:

“In the first movement, Lusheng Ensemble, the cello solo plays the lead rôle and the group of winds represent the ensemble. Imagining the bell sound from a distance, the cello and winds are merged together with mysterious harmonics in the second movement, Echoes of the Set Bells. In the third movement, Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in, the cello transmits a lyrical sense to express the composer’s love for humanity, while the wind ensemble, sounding like an enlarged Ch'in, symbolizes nature. The finale, Flower Drums in Dance, comes back to an energetic scene. The rhythmic design is inspired by Chinese traditional percussion ensemble music. Making the drum sound, the wind ensemble accompanies and competes with the solo cello, building up a momentum and leading the music to a lively ending.

This new version was given its premiere in 2005 by cellist Carter Enyeart, and was conducted by Sarah McKoin. The exuberant and celebratory KC Capriccio was commissioned by the UMKC Conservatory of Music in 2000 as part of the 150th Anniversary of Kansas City and was inspired by a folk-tune played on a bagpipe that Chen heard on the lawn outside of the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City. Additionally, she drew on the "wild singing sound" and spirit of the Asian folk choral music tradition to accompany this tune. The première took place in 2000 in Kansas City, conducted by Sarah McKoin, and the China National Symphony and choir gave the Asian premiere in 2001 at the Beijing Concert Hall in Beijing, conducted by Robert Olson.

The two woodwind quintets on this recording illustrate different aspects of Chen’s compositional style and are both inspired by different Chinese traditions. The term ‘feng’ refers to the Chinese character which means, "wind" or "the winds". Other meanings also include “view, folk-songs, style and manner” according to Chen. Written in 1998 and commissioned by the San Francisco Citywinds, Feng seeks to "sound the Eastern feeling of the winds" and is cast in two movements: Introduction and Rondo.

The earlier quintet of 1987, simply titled, Woodwind Quintet, draws on the following for its motivation:

“The creative inspiration of my Woodwind Quintet came from the booming tide of Chaoqin Cave in the Putuo Mountain located in Southeastern China; the dull chanting from the Buddhist nunnery; the reciting tunes played on a Xiao, a Chinese traditional woodwind instrument; and the rude, primitive roaring of a Changjian, a Tibetan low-range wind instrument.”

The 1987 première took place at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, with the conductor Efrain Guigui and the Composers Conference Ensemble. Tu, the angriest and most intense work on this collection, was composed between July and August of 2002 as a reaction to 9/11. Commissioned in 2000 by the Women’s Philharmonic and the American Composers Orchestra with an NEA grant, the work is “dedicated to the memory of NYC firefighters who sacrificed themselves for protecting thousands of fellow citizens at the 9/11 tragedy in 2001, and also to express the composer’s compassion for the victims and their families, to denounce terrorist acts and to call for peace of the future.”

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra, with the conductor Lan Shui, performed the first orchestral recorded version in 2002. The official world première occurred two years later in 2004 with the Women’s Philharmonic and conductor Anne Manson. The wind ensemble version also had its première in 2004 in Kansas City, with the conductor Sarah McKoin. Interestingly, the wind ensemble version has even more intensity than the orchestral version the central section of which has a gripping pedal that is played in octaves by the cellos and basses. In the wind orchestration, Chen uses a double saxophone quartet, which intones a pedal ninth that adds a level of foreboding to the soundscapes. It is vociferous, loud, dissonant and scary reflecting the meaning of the Chinese character “Tu” which can be related to “burning, poison, or fire.”

Sarah McKoin
Carter Enyeart

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Carter Enyeart has enjoyed a distinguished and varied career in the symphonic and chamber music fields. He has been a member of the Pittsburgh and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras, principal cellist of the Dallas Opera, a member of the renowned Philadelphia String Quartet and American Piano Trio, and Associate Artistic Director and cellist of the Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth. After teaching at Ball State University, Northwestern University, and the University of North Texas he was appointed to the Rose Ann Carr Millsap/Missouri as Distinguished Professor of Cello at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory, where he also coordinates the String Chamber Music Program. His concert appearances as soloist and chamber musician have been acclaimed in the United States and in the music capitals of Europe, Asia and South America. His first recording for Centaur, of music by David Dzubay, won critical acclaim. This was followed by a recording of chamber music by Robert Muczynski, which includes the first recording of Gallery, a suite for solo cello. He has composed cello accompaniments for the Popper High School Etudes, published by International Music Company of NYC, and is the editor for more new IMC editions of cello etudes and technical studies.

The Lubbock Chorale

The Lubbock Civic Chorale was founded in September 1976, following numerous enthusiastic performances by a “sing-along” group during the city’s Bicentennial celebration. The first group comprised only a handful of singers who had a dream of creating choral excellence on the South Plains. Over the years, the group grew to a viable force in Lubbock. It successfully performed the works of composers such as Bach, Mozart, Haydn and Brahms. Most of these were accompanied by piano until the spring of 1985, when the Chorale was asked to perform with the Texas Tech University choirs and the University Symphony Orchestra in the annual Scholarship Concerts. Following the 1987 Scholarship Concert, efforts were made to form a union between the civic and university forces. The Lubbock Civic Chorale and the Texas Tech Choral Union merged into the University-Civic Chorale to provide musical interaction between Tech’s college students, faculty and staff and singers in the community. The result has been outstanding as the Chorale continues to act as an independent musical organization with both youthful enthusiasm and mature aspirations. The combined forces created a chorale of substantial size, able to perform many of the major choral works with full orchestral accompaniment. Included in the chorale’s recent repertoire are such works as Handel’s Messiah and contemporary works such as Leonard Bernstein’s Chichester Psalms, Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana, Karl Jenkins’ The Armed Man: a Mass for Peace, and Beethoven’s monumental Ninth Symphony. The ensemble changed its name to The Lubbock Chorale in October 1992 and has steadily and consistently grown in stature and reputation to become a viable artistic force in the South Plains. Concert seasons now regularly include the presentation of choral masterworks with full symphony orchestra. Realizing its educational vision and mission, the Chorale also provides between 10-15 scholarships to music students each year. An internal body of participating members called the Administrative Council governs the Lubbock Chorale, and a vitally active Board of Directors guides the organization in development and community relations. In 2008 Dr John Hollins was named the new Artistic Director of The Lubbock Chorale. With exciting new initiatives in advocacy, outreach, and education, the Chorale looks forward to continuing its tradition of presenting unique choral programs and artistic experiences to the Lubbock Community.
Texas Tech Symphonic Wind Ensemble
Director: Sarah McKoin

The Texas Tech Symphonic Wind Ensemble has twice performed for the Texas Music Educators Association Conference, as well as performing for the College Band Director’s National Association. In addition to the world première recordings of Chen Yi’s wind music, Sarah McKoin’s ensemble has recorded Naruto Prancharoen’s Chaktra released as part of his CD entitled Phenomenon. She has recorded for the Naxos, Albany and Mark labels. Prior to her appointment in Texas, McKoin served on the faculties at the University of Missouri Kansas City, and SUNY-Buffalo. Additionally, she spent several summers in residence on the conducting faculty at the Brevard Music Center in Brevard, North Carolina, as the Director of the Transylvania Wind Ensemble. She has taught at the Interlochen Arts Academy and maintains an active schedule as a guest conductor and clinician. She has traveled extensively throughout the United States and abroad including engagements in China, Taipei, Taiwan and Canada. She served as producer with the Israeli Chamber Orchestra and the Castellani-Andriaccio guitar duo on the world première recording of Roberto Sierra’s Fantasia Corelliana. Sarah McKoin holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, Wichita State University and Michigan State University. She is professionally active in the College Band Director’s National Association as well as TMEA, TBA, Phi Beta Mu and Pi Kappa Lambda, and holds honorary memberships of Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma.

Performers on the Cello Suite and woodwind quintets

Lisa Garner-Santa, Flute* 2-8
Amy Anderson, Oboe* 2-8
Malcolm Prigg, Clarinet 2-8
Richard Meek, Bassoon* 2-8
Joseph Vandiver, Trumpet 2-5
Jeff Garza, Horn 2-8
James Decker, Trombone* 2-5
Alan Shinn, Percussion* 2-5

*TTU faculty
CHEN YI
(b. 1953)
Music for Wind Band

1 KC Capriccio for wind ensemble and mixed chorus (2000) 4:11
2 I. Lusheng Ensemble 4:54
3 II. Echoes of the Set Bells 3:24
4 III. Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in 3:41
5 IV. Flower Drums in Dance 6:50
   Feng for woodwind quintet (1998) 11:05
6 I. Introduction 3:59
7 II. Rondo 7:06
8 Woodwind Quintet (1987) 8:46

Carter Enyeart, Cello
Members of The Lubbock Chorale (John Dickson, Chorus-master)
Texas Tech University
Wind Ensemble
Sarah McKoin

Chinese American composer Chen Yi brings a unique compositional voice to the wind ensemble by fusing the traditions and sounds of the East with those of her adopted West. This collection of world première recordings ranges from the first wind quintet of 1987, inspired by the booming tide of Chaoyin Cave in Southeastern China, to the Suite for Cello and Chamber Winds of 2004 in which Chen borrows extensively from folk-tunes, Chinese percussion, stringed, and wind instruments. The exuberant KC Capriccio contrasts with the gripping intensity of Tu, which is dedicated to the victims of the 9/11 tragedy.

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

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Playing Time: 53:45